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## TRAFFIC CRASH AVOIDANCE PROGRAM

The information contained in this document is printed with the express desire to inform young and older drivers of the five (5) most frequent types of traffic crashes that occur within the City of Troy. Reading the following information and becoming familiar with it will help you avoid these five (5) and other types of crashes.

Being the driver of a motor vehicle is an awesome privilege and responsibility. Your driving ability is often the difference in determining whether you or someone else will be injured or killed in a traffic crash. Please take this responsibility to heart because of the serious nature associated with operating a motor vehicle.

Although most people refer to a collision between two or more vehicles as a “traffic accident”, it is actually a misnomer. In the traffic business collisions are referred to as “traffic crashes” because accidents don’t just happen. There are reasons crashes take place and, generally speaking, they happen because one or more of the drivers involved did something they should not have done while operating a motor vehicle. As a result of a driver’s error a crash often occurs. That is why a traffic citation is often written to drivers found most at fault in a traffic crash.

Driving a motor vehicle is not rocket science but it can be dangerous. The penalties for operating a motor vehicle in a manner that leads to the injury or death of another individual will undoubtedly change your life forever, in a bad way! Insurance costs, and lost job opportunities are just two of the areas that may affect you for the rest of your life.

**BE SMART! BE RESPONSIBLE! BE ALERT! BE SAFE!**  
**Your life and the lives of those around you depend on it!**



## **TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

### **Chapter 106 Section 5.9 – SPEED AND CAUTION RESTRICTIONS**

- (1) *Any person who drives a vehicle on a street shall drive the vehicle using due care and caution and at a careful and prudent speed which is reasonable and proper considering the traffic, surface and width of the street, and any other condition then existing. A person shall not drive any vehicle on a street at speeds greater than will permit him or her to bring the vehicle to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead. A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.***

The most frequent traffic crash within the City of Troy involves one vehicle being driven into the back of another vehicle. There are several reasons why this might happen. Generally it happens because people drive too close to the vehicle traveling in front of them. The lack of distance between two motor vehicles diminishes the opportunity for the driver of the trailing vehicle to react in time to avoid crashing into the vehicle traveling in front of them, especially when the trailing vehicle is traveling too fast to be able to stop in that space we refer to as the 'assured clear distance ahead'. The assured clear distance is that distance you need to have between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you in order to be able to stop your vehicle in time to avoid striking the vehicle in front of you. Obviously, this distance will vary depending on the speed you are traveling and the road conditions.

There is a rule of thumb, however, you might find useful which should help give you that proper spacing. The general rule is to give your vehicle at least one car length of space for every ten miles per hour you are traveling. With all things being equal, (alertness, reaction time, speed, road conditions, good vehicle condition, etc.) between you, your vehicle, and the driver of the vehicle in front of you, the distance created by using this rule should allow you to be able to stop your vehicle in time to avoid a crash should the vehicle in front of you stop suddenly. If you are traveling too close, and at a speed that is too fast, the likelihood is great that you will crash into the vehicle in front of you should that vehicle stop suddenly.

Another rule to consider is the two (2) second rule. When the vehicle in front of you passes a fixed object you should be able to count "one-thousand one, one-thousand two", before your vehicle gets to that same fixed object. This will generally allow you the distance you need to stop your vehicle in time should the vehicle in front of you stop unexpectedly. This two (2) second rule takes into consideration the average 1.5 second reaction time it normally takes a person to go from accelerator pedal to brake pedal. Reaction times will vary with age and physical ability. The best rule would be to allow three (3) seconds between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you on dry pavement, with good visibility; six (6) seconds of separation on wet roads; and nine (9) seconds of separation in snowy and icy conditions. The goal here is to keep your vehicle from striking the vehicle in front of you!

Keep in mind that in almost all rear end crashes, the driver of the vehicle that crashed into the vehicle in front of them will be cited for failing to stop in the assured clear

distance ahead. It is your responsibility to make sure you have enough distance between your vehicle and the vehicle traveling in front of you!

There are times when crashing into the back end of the vehicle in front of you will happen even with proper spacing. These crashes often occur when a driver is distracted. Recently a driver was distracted when he reached to answer his ringing cell phone that was on the front passenger seat of his vehicle. During the second or two it took the driver to look down to retrieve the cell phone to answer it, the vehicle in front of him suddenly stopped. By the time the driver refocused on the roadway and realized what was happening there was not enough reaction time or distance between the two vehicles for the driver to stop before the vehicles crashed. Police officers see this type of scenario happening more frequently these days. The same result happens when drivers are distracted when applying makeup while driving, shaving while driving, dropping a lit cigarette while driving, text messaging on their cell phone while driving, or fishing for that ever elusive French fry that is somewhere at the bottom of the bag from your favorite fast food restaurant, while driving. Any distraction you allow to happen while you are operating a motor vehicle has the potential to result in a traffic crash!

Here are some examples of what happened to drivers involved in crashes due to distracted driving. These true statements are just a small sampling of actual statements completed by drivers found to be at fault in a traffic crash in the City of Troy over the past six months:

"I was making a cell phone call so I did not see the red light."

"I rear-ended the other driver while looking at a text message."

"I was driving this morning around the corner when somebody called my phone. I took my eyes off the road to answer the phone. I lost control of the car, and when I'm looking back at the road I'm driving on someone's sidewalk and I knocked over a tree."

"I looked down to answer my telephone and the light changed simultaneously. I then accidentally struck the driver in front of me."

"I was pulling out of my work parking lot at about 7:30. It was slightly snow covered and icy. I proceeded to pull out of the parking space and started driving. I was looking down to pick up my cell phone and when I looked up I saw the tree and tried to stop but believe I slid on the snow/ice and was unable to stop. I admit I was probably driving a little too fast."

"I was reaching for my Chapstick when I struck a parked car."

"I was driving east on Long Lake, attempting to contact my husband and I was looking down as I attempted to place the charger into the phone to obtain reception, thereby hitting the vehicle in front of me."

"I was late to basketball practice and made some food. I was pulling out of my driveway when I got to the road, the food spills onto my shorts and I looked down to wipe it off so it didn't stain. I then ran into a parked car."

"I was stopped in the turn lane and called my friend to tell her I wouldn't be able to pick her up for church – my cell phone slipped and when I grabbed it the car in front of me stopped and I hit it."

"I was driving down Falmouth and looked down to put my coffee cup down and when I looked up a parked car was right in front of me and I couldn't stop, and I hit it."

"I was driving west bound on Big Beaver Road when I received a text, I looked down at it and as soon as I did I crashed."

"I was smoking in the car while driving and threw the cigarette butt out of the window. But the cigarette was pushed back into the car and I was attempting to reach it. That's when I lost control of driving and spun into the ditch."

Again, this is just a "sampling" of many other statements just like these. There are many drivers out there doing the same type of things that these drivers did and became involved in crashes as a result of their actions. You need to drive defensively to avoid these types of drivers!

There are ways to eliminate these and other types of distractions but it takes discipline. Consider the following suggestions to reduce your chances of being distracted while operating a motor vehicle.

Turn your cell phone off when you drive. Believe it or not, there was a time, not too long ago, when you had to pull over to the side of the road and use a phone booth to make a telephone call. These calls were made without fear of causing traffic safety concerns for other motorists. There were no issues, then, of driving while talking on a cell phone. A recent Michigan State Police study indicated the underlying cause of many reported crashes were distractions. For example, in 2001 there were at least five (5) fatal crashes in Michigan where the responsible driver was distracted by the use of a cell phone. If you have to have your cell phone on, don't answer it when it rings while you are driving. We have all been "programmed", to a great degree, to answer a phone whenever it rings. You need to break yourself of that 'programmed' habit when you drive. Instead of answering the phone right away, pull over to a safe area off of the roadway and then return the call.

Do not text, read texts, read emails, answer emails, while driving. Texting while driving is **VERY DANGEROUS**. Beginning July 1, 2010, the State of Michigan texting law goes into effect. If you are caught texting you will receive a ticket with a fine of \$ 100.00 for a first offense. The fine for a second offense is \$ 200.00.

There has been some talk about ways to beat the new law and people are wondering how it will be enforced. Police officers know the games being played, like wearing

sunglasses, for example, in an attempt to elude this type of violation. You may even get away with it for some time. However, it will catch up to you, sooner or later, and when it does, hopefully, it will not be at a time when you are involved in a crash that results in a serious injury or death to an innocent driver trying to get home to their family. If that should happen there is a strong likelihood that you will be texting from prison, if they even allow you to have a cell phone there!

The City of Troy Police Department, particularly the Traffic Safety Unit, will be vigorously out patrolling and enforcing this new law when it goes into effect July 1, 2010!

Keep the volume on your radio or MP3 player at a reasonable decibel level. This will allow you to listen for emergency vehicles, horns, or other alerts that will help you adjust your driving if needed.

Do not allow horseplay in your vehicle. As the driver of a motor vehicle YOU are responsible for what takes place inside the vehicle you control. As the driver, YOU are responsible for any contraband that is in the vehicle. As the driver, YOU are responsible for the safe operation of your vehicle. If you have friends who are “messaging around” in your vehicle and that activity causes a distraction to you, and that distraction ends up being an underlying factor that leads to a crash involving the injury or death of another person, then YOU, as the driver, will have much to answer for. There have been numerous FATAL crashes where friends were “messaging around” in a motor vehicle and the distractions generated from those actions had a direct link to causing those injury or fatal crashes.

A recent March 2008 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) revealed that when teenage drivers transport passengers there is a greater risk of a traffic crash. The risk of a traffic crash is 3-5 times greater when there are multiple passengers in a vehicle operated by a teenage driver.

Leave early for wherever you have to travel. Rushing causes you to focus on time rather than on driving safely. Rushing causes drivers, particularly those with little driving experience, to take dangerous and unnecessary chances to get to where they need to get to on time. Driving in a manner that will likely put you and others at risk is totally unnecessary and preventable.

#### **TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

##### **Chapter 106 Section 5.29 – FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY**

- (1) The driver of a motor vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent considering the speed of such vehicle and the traffic on, and the condition of, the street. A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.***

This particular law ties in with what was mentioned previously regarding driving too close to the vehicle in front of you. This violation is written to serve notice to drivers and as a preventative measure to avoid the rear end crashes from occurring in the first place.

Drivers need to consider that when you drive, your vehicle is traveling at about 1.466 feet per second per mile an hour of speed. So, for example, if you are on the freeway, traveling at the posted 70 MPH limit, you are traveling at about 102 feet per second! Considering the average reaction time to be approximately 1.5 seconds, you will travel about 153 feet **before** you apply your brakes to stop your vehicle if you had to stop suddenly. If you remember the 2 second rule previously mentioned, your vehicle should be about 204 feet behind the vehicle in front of you when you are on the freeway traveling at the 70 MPH speed. How many drivers actually leave that kind of space and are you now surprised that following too close is one of the leading causes of crashes?

### **TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

#### **Chapter 106 Section 5.23 – NO PASSING ZONES**

- (1) The driver of a vehicle shall not overtake and pass any vehicle in a no passing zone where official signs or markings on the roadway indicate the beginning and end of such zone and when such signs or markings are in place and clearly visible to an ordinarily observant person. A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.***

This is another frequent type of crash that occurs within the City of Troy. Some of the same causes of crashes that occurred under the previously mentioned section certainly apply to this one, particularly those causes relating to people being distracted or who are in a hurry.

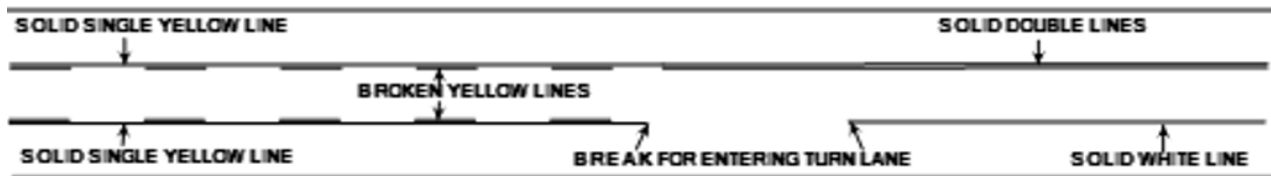
People in our society tend to get frustrated easily because we live in an era where we have that “fast food” mentality. People are just not willing to wait their turn, something they teach you to do in kindergarten! As a result, people feel the need to get to where they want to go as quickly as possible. Perhaps it is a soccer practice, a doctor’s appointment, or an imposed curfew. Whatever the reason, our busy lives tend to dictate how we drive and oftentimes that leads to mistakes which cause crashes.

This particular ordinance is written for those who enter the center turn lane so they can make their left turn and get to where they are going. This is fine, if they enter the center turn lane at the correct place. The diagram in figure # 1 shows you the ‘break’ in the roadway markings that allows you to properly enter the left turn lane to make a turn. The break refers to the non-painted area of the lane between where the painted solid yellow line stops and the painted solid white line begins. You are not supposed to enter that center turn lane until you get to that ‘break’. However, if left turn traffic is backed up to a point past that break, you can enter the center turn lane JUST BEHIND the last vehicle in line, as depicted in figure #2. You CANNOT travel the center turn lane or pass **any** vehicle stopped in the through lanes, as depicted in figure # 3. This happens quite frequently during rush hour traffic, but can actually happen at any time of day. That painted solid yellow line represents a “NO PASSING” zone. Violators are written for improper passing under this ordinance and are assessed three (3) points to their driving record upon being found responsible for this violation.

The crashes occur under this ordinance violation when a vehicle illegally traveling the center turn lane strikes a vehicle that legally enters the center turn lane ahead of them, as depicted in figure # 4.

Another more frequent cause of crashes, while illegally utilizing the center left turn lane, occurs when through traffic stops for a vehicle preparing to leave a private drive. As the vehicle enters the roadway from the private drive it may wish to enter either the left turn lane, to make a left turn, or it may wish to proceed across the through lanes and center turn lane to travel in the opposite direction. What happens next is that when the vehicle leaving the private drive crosses into the center left turn lane it is often struck by a vehicle that illegally entered the left turn lane, as depicted in figure # 5.

**Figure # 1**



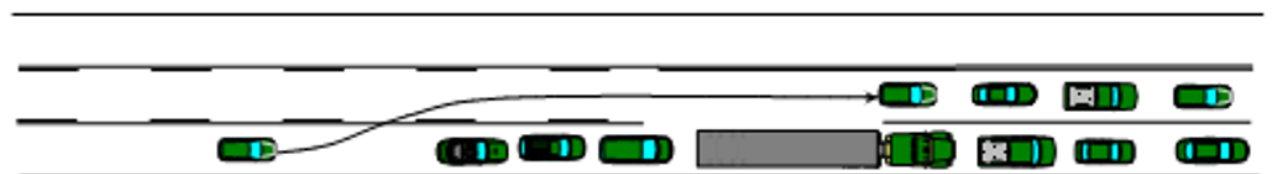
THE PROPER AREA FOR ENTERING A LEFT TURN LANE, AT THE BREAK

**Figure # 2**



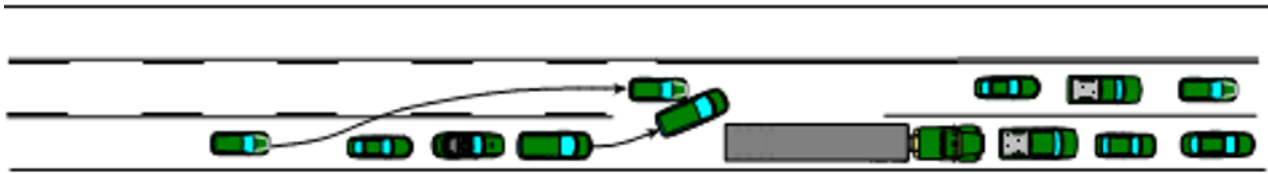
IT IS OKAY TO ENTER THE LEFT TURN LANE IF THE CENTER LANE IS BACKED UP, AS LONG AS  
YOU DO NOT PASS ANY VEHICLES

**Figure # 3**



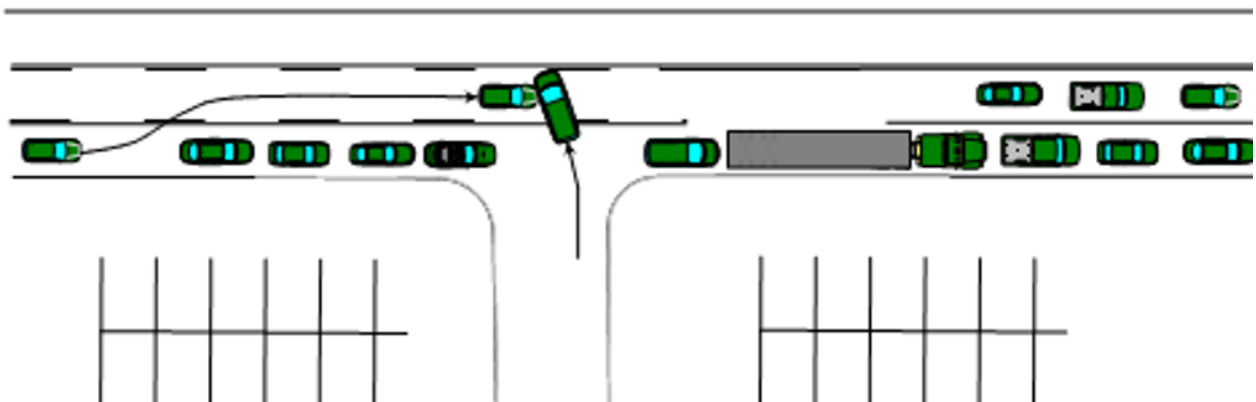
ANY TIME YOU PASS VEHICLES WHILE IN THE CENTER TURN LANE IT IS A VIOLATION

**Figure # 4**



**BE AWARE OF VEHICLES ILLEGALLY TRAVELING THE CENTER TURN LANE**

**Figure # 5**



**THIS SCENARIO IS EERILY SIMILAR TO THE 'GOOD SAMARITAN' SCENARIO BELOW**

Another problem associated with the use of the center left turn lane brings us to the next type of crash in the City of Troy. That cause is 'failing to yield the right of way'.

**TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

**Chapter 106 Section 5.43 – Right of Way; Vehicle Turning Left at Intersection**

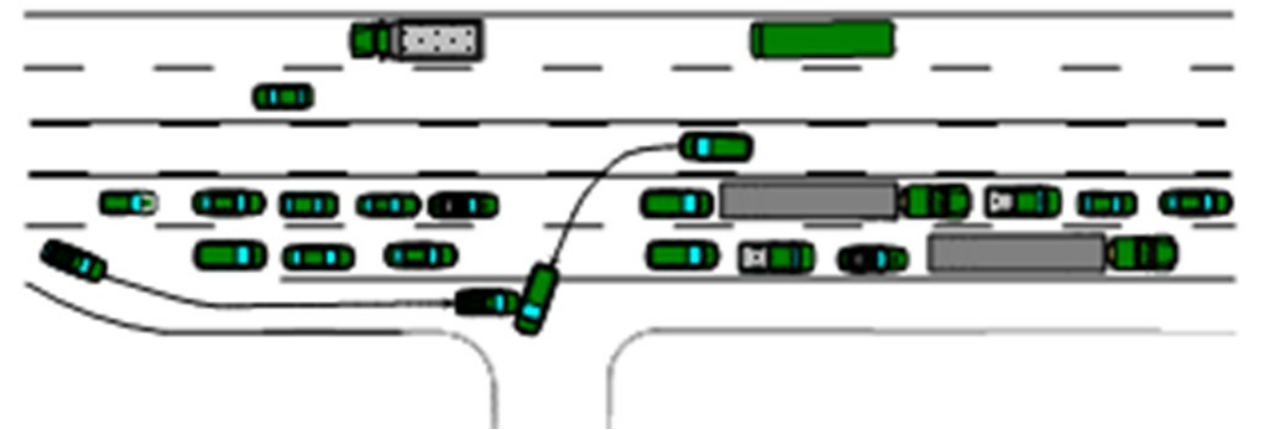
- (1) *The driver of a vehicle within an intersection who intends to turn to the left shall yield the right of way to any vehicle approaching from the opposite direction which is within the intersection or which is so close thereto as to constitute an immediate hazard, but the driver having so yielded and having given signal when and as required by this code, may make such left turn and the drivers of all other vehicles approaching the intersection from the opposite direction shall yield the right-of-way to the vehicle making the left turn, however, at an intersection at which a traffic signal is located, a driver who intends to make a left turn shall permit vehicles bound straight through in the opposite direction which are awaiting a go signal to pass through the intersection. A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.***

This particular law is related, to a degree, to the center left turn traffic ordinance just mentioned. To help illustrate what occurs during these types of crashes I will present the information, followed by a diagram in figure # 6, of what typically takes place.

You are traveling south on Rochester Road just south of Long Lake Road. You are heading toward a business to get a sewing machine repaired. The business that does that kind of repair work is located on the east side of Rochester Road so you get into the center left turn lane to make your turn into the business. You wait as northbound Rochester Road traffic approaches the area you are waiting to turn. The traffic signal at Long Lake Road turns red and you now have northbound traffic backing up to your location. There are three northbound lanes in the area, two through lanes and one right turn only lane. The vehicles in both through lanes stop to allow you access to the business driveway you want to turn into. How nice of them to allow you access! As you go to make your turn, however, a vehicle in the right turn lane approaches your location and strikes the right side of your vehicle. YOU are at fault for failing to yield the right of way. The vehicle that struck you has the right of way. He or she is under no obligation to stop short like the two "Good Samaritans" did. They just want to get to the corner to make their right turn to go home and here you go turning in front of them, possibly causing them injury or worse. It has also been noted that these "Good Samaritans" generally don't stick around to help you once you have crashed your vehicle.

Unfortunately, this scenario happens all too frequently in Troy, and elsewhere, and people have been seriously injured or killed because of this. You need to make sure that ALL traffic lanes you need to cross are clear or stopped BEFORE you make your turn. So, in addition to having your vehicle damaged, with possible injuries to yourself or others, you also get cited for "Fail to Yield Right of Way". Again, be alert, do not be in a hurry, and watch out for other traffic!

**Figure # 6**



**BE WARY OF THE 'GOOD SAMARITAN', STOPPING TO LET YOU MAKE YOUR TURN**

## **TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

### **Chapter 106 Section 4.6 – Traffic-Control Signal Placement and Legend**

- (1) *When traffic is controlled by traffic-control signals, at least one (1) signal shall be located over the traveled portion of the roadway to give drivers a clear indication of the right-of-way assignment from their normal positions approaching the intersection. The vehicle signals shall exhibit different colored lights successively one (1) at a time or with arrows. The following colors shall be used and the terms and lights shall indicate and apply to drivers of vehicles as follows:***
- (a) *GREEN INDICATION: Vehicular traffic facing the signal may proceed straight through or turn right or left, unless a sign at such place prohibits either turn. However, vehicular traffic, including vehicles turning right or left, shall yield the right-of-way to other vehicles and to pedestrians who are lawfully within the intersection or an adjacent crosswalk at the time such signal is exhibited.***
  - (b) *STEADY YELLOW INDICATION: Vehicular traffic facing the signal shall stop before entering the nearest crosswalk at the intersection or at a limit line, when marked, but if such stop cannot be safely made, a vehicle may be driven cautiously through the intersection.***
  - (c) *STEADY RED INDICATION: Vehicular traffic facing a steady red signal alone shall stop before entering the crosswalk on the near side of the intersection or at a limit line, when marked, or, if none, then before entering the intersection and shall remain standing until a green indication is shown, except that vehicular traffic facing a steady red signal, after stopping before entering the crosswalk on the near side of the intersection or at a limit line, when marked, or, if none, then before entering the intersection, may make a right turn from a 1- or 2-way street into a 2-way street or into a 1-way street carrying traffic in the direction of the right turn or may make a left turn from a 1-or 2-way street into a 1-way roadway carrying traffic in the direction of the left turn unless prohibited by sign, signal, marking, light, or other traffic-control device. The vehicular traffic shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians who are lawfully within an adjacent crosswalk and to other traffic lawfully using the intersection.***
- A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.**

This particular ordinance covers red light violations, from which we get some severe traffic crashes causing injury and death. These are some of the most dangerous violations a driver can encounter due to the fact that often the speed of the violating vehicle will determine just how bad the result of the crash will be.

These crashes occur, again, because people are distracted or are in a hurry, in some cases both occur. One actual fatal crash that comes to mind, as an example, involved a driver on a cell phone approaching a red signal at a major intersection. The driver was not speeding but going near the posted forty-five (45) MPH limit. The driver drove

through the red signal without slowing down and struck a vehicle that began to move forward after the opposing traffic light turned green. The teenage driver of the vehicle that just started up on the green traffic signal failed to look before proceeding through the intersection. (This is a major mistake! You need to develop the habit of **ALWAYS** looking before you proceed through any intersection on a green light!) The teenage driver's vehicle was struck by the vehicle that ran the red light. The teenage driver of the struck vehicle died at the scene.

This is the hard and horrible reality behind driving a motor vehicle. As stated earlier, this is not an "accident". This crash was caused by a driver who was distracted by the conversation on a cell phone which caused them to disregard the approaching red signal. Do you think the call was that important that it caused a young driver to lose their life? Driving defensively is a must. The teenage driver who died in this crash could have possibly avoided death by taking that extra second to "look both ways before crossing the street", another concept we all learned in kindergarten! Too many times we become 'programmed' to react to certain things without really thinking about them, like the ringing cell phone example previously mentioned. The phone rings and we immediately answer it, without thinking whether it would be in our best interest to answer it now or not. The light turns green and we immediately drive through an intersection without looking to see if anything or anyone is going to get in our way. It only takes a second to assess things. Take the time to program yourself to react in a way that will give you, and others, the best chance of surviving.

You can avoid these types of violations by staying focused, going the speed limit or below, making sure your vehicle is in good repair (brakes!), and not trying to 'beat the light' as many drivers seem to have developed a habit of doing.

By the way, a YELLOW signal means to STOP!!!! It does NOT mean speed up and try to make it through the intersection before the traffic signal turns red. Increasing your speed when a traffic signal turns yellow is like playing 'Russian Roulette' with your vehicle and is an almost certain recipe for disaster. The result of which will not be good for you or the person and/or vehicle you strike.

### **TROY CITY CODE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE:**

#### **Chapter 106 Section 5.26 – Driving on Roadways Laned for Traffic**

*(1) When a roadway is divided into two (2) or more clearly marked lanes for traffic, the following rules, in addition to all other rules consistent herewith, apply.*

*(a) A vehicle shall be driven, as nearly as practicable, entirely within a single lane and shall not be moved from the lane until the driver has first made sure the movement can be made with safety. On a roadway with four (4) or more lanes which provides for two-way movement of traffic, a vehicle shall be driven within the extreme right-hand lane, except when overtaking and passing, and shall not cross the center line of the roadway unless making a left turn. A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.*

This is the ordinance that covers the infraction often titled: **Changed Lanes without Safe Observation.** This is another type of crash we often police within the City of Troy. The cause for this of crash is often, again, the driver rushing to get somewhere, being distracted, or both.

When you are in a hurry or are distracted you take hurried looks and oftentimes you may miss something in a mirror, in the lane next to you, in front of you, or behind you. As diagrammed in figure # 7, if a driver makes a move to take their vehicle, (A), from one lane into a lane occupied by another vehicle, (B), and strikes vehicle (B), then driver (A) is at fault.

When changing lanes you may wish to keep in mind that the vehicle in the lane you now want to go into has already established their “assured clear distance”. If you go into that lane and have now reduced that distance between you and the vehicle now behind you and you suddenly have to stop, don’t be surprised if that vehicle now becomes part of the trunk of your vehicle.

**Figure # 7**



**CHECK YOUR MIRRORS AND BE AWARE OF ALL VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS AROUND YOU**

There are many other traffic crash causing violations that occur in the City of Troy as well as in other jurisdictions. The violations mentioned here are just the major causes of crashes we have experienced in the City of Troy year after year. ALL violations carry the same common denominators: Speed (in a hurry), distractions (cell phone, iPod, eating in your car, etc.), inexperience, and risk taking, to name just a few.

Take time to educate yourself about becoming a better driver. Avoid the same mistakes made by other drivers. Give yourself plenty of time. Give yourself plenty of room. Remove driving distractions.

Remember the simple things we learned as kids, like waiting your turn, being courteous, and looking both ways before crossing the street.

Don’t be too concerned about what others might think of you (as related to your **good** driving habits). Stay focused and in control of your motor vehicle at all times and you will survive many years and many miles of safe driving!

**DRIVE RESPONSIBLY!**

**DRIVE DEFENSIVELY!**

**DRIVE TO SURVIVE!**



[http://www.cityoftroypolice.com/about/traffic\\_safety\\_unit.html](http://www.cityoftroypolice.com/about/traffic_safety_unit.html)

**If you have any questions regarding Traffic Safety issues, please call The Troy Police Department, Traffic Safety Unit, at 248-524-3427 or 248-524-3432.**

**A copy of the entire Troy City Code Traffic Ordinance can be found on the City of Troy Website:**

**[www.troymi.gov](http://www.troymi.gov)**